

Bringing Home Your Second Dog

Congratulations on adding a new dog to your home! Now your dogs need an opportunity to have a successful relationship and build that relationship slowly. Most dogs do very well together and live peacefully, but just like people, it's not always love at first sight. The key is to introduce the dogs slowly and make all associations positive. It's up to us to provide an environment where they can succeed.

Use these tips to help create a stress-free environment which will help both dogs succeed. Most dogs do well with a canine companion, but it can take time to build those relationships. Doing slow introductions over a few days or even weeks is best. Happy, healthy relationships take time to build.

- Provide slow, well-managed introductions in a neutral environment, starting with parallel walks.
- Supervision is essential. All interactions should be supervised until each dog is comfortable in the presence of the other dog.
- Tools are useful. Baby gates, a drag leash, and crates will help to manage dog interaction. Make sure each dog has their own safe area.
- Remove all toys, chews, and rawhides for the first few weeks until you know your dogs are getting along. Some dogs never like to share.
- Feed dogs in separate areas where they cannot see each other. Food is one of the most valuable resources in the dog world. Feeding apart will promote relaxed mealtimes and prevent any competition or stress.

- Initially, avoid situations of arousal. Any situation that raises the excitement should be avoided, including visitors, other dogs, family members returning home, and being in close quarters like doorways or hallways.
- Give your existing dog lots of attention, especially when the new dog comes near. Instead of seeing the new family member as a threat, he will see that he gets lots of attention when the new dog is around.
- Make sure both dogs are getting adequate exercise and walks. Just 20–25 minutes of exercise can decrease many behavioral problems.
- If your dogs are different ages, they may have very different needs. Consider sending a younger dog to daycare, or doing an extra walk with the younger dog while the older dog gets a nice chew toy at home.
- Do not correct low level communication, instead take a step back in your introduction program by giving your dogs more space and time. Dogs often have conflicts, so if there is a growl or stare, this can be normal dog communication. It's best to supervise, manage, distract, or create positive associations rather than correcting them.
- Do not leave the dogs alone together in the home until you know they are both comfortable with each other. This can take weeks or even months.
- If you need more information or assistance, contact the shelter to set up a session with our Dog Training and Behavior Manager.

